



U.S. Department of Justice

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**UNITED STATES ATTORNEY STEPHEN J. MURPHY
ANNOUNCES NEW INITIATIVE TO COMBAT
METHAMPHETAMINE IN COORDINATION WITH DEA - LED
“OPERATION WILDFIRE”**

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy today announced new initiatives his office is putting in place to combat the production and distribution of methamphetamine in the Eastern District of Michigan. This initiative is being coordinated with DEA-led “Operation Wildfire”, the largest nationally coordinated law enforcement effort designed to target all levels of the methamphetamine manufacturing and distribution chain in the United States and continue to fight against the spread of methamphetamine. “Operation Wildfire” follows President George Bush’s national strategy to battle the meth drug plague as announced last week by Attorney General Alberto Gonzales in Nashville, Tennessee.

Methamphetamine (“Meth”) is a powerful central nervous system stimulant which can come in the form of powder, pills, base or as a high-potency re-crystallized powder. Meth can be inhaled, smoked, injected or swallowed, depending on the form. The effects from the use of meth can be devastating. Negative physical effects include increased heart rate, blood pressure, decreased appetite, sleep and lung function. Psychological effects includes confusion, lack of concentration, hallucinations, depression, anger and psychosis. Meth use can also cause intense itching that users liken to bugs crawling under their skin. Severe dental problem can also occur such as rotting of the gums and teeth. During the manufacturing

process, meth cooks face exposure to toxic fumes, asphyxiation and the possibility of serious injury or death due to fire or explosion. These dangers extend to those in close proximity who may not be involved in the process, such as children.

During the past four weeks, local agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration, along with the Michigan State Police, Jackson County Narcotics Enforcement Team, Kalamazoo Valley Enforcement Team, Southwest Enforcement Team and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives have executed various search warrants and arrests warrants in the Eastern District with notable efforts to get ahead of the methamphetamine curse and to send a message to manufacturers and dealers of the drug that federal law enforcement is serious about preventing an epidemic in the district where Murphy serves.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Under U.S. Attorney Murphy's plan, the United States Attorney's Office will place a high priority on the prosecution of methamphetamine cooks and repeat offenders, with special emphasis being given to the small toxic labs ("STLs") that crop up in rural areas of the district and upon which Congress has placed a high level of concern.

Earlier this month, for instance, a defendant was sentenced in the Eastern District of Michigan to serve 120 months in federal prison for his conviction on meth related charges. In United States v. Davis, evidence presented at trial showed that Davis, a nomadic meth "cook" from Arizona set up three separate clandestine meth labs in the State of Michigan, including one that exploded and burned in 2001. This lab, which could be fairly construed as a STL was located in Cadillac, Michigan and its explosion burned and severely injured a co-conspirator named David Bowen. The evidence also demonstrated that Davis traveled all over Michigan and Ohio to purchase thousands of cold and allergy tablets containing pseudoephedrine, a key ingredient to manufacture meth.

There are currently three other defendants under indictment for the possession of methamphetamine in this district, including the case of Demetrius Meffer and Michael Mastromatteo who are currently charged, among other things, with endangering human life

while illegally manufacturing meth. Other investigations continue to date.

U.S. Attorney Murphy has assigned an attorney in the office's Controlled Substances Unit to serve as the district's Meth Coordinator. This attorney will be assigned the task of identifying major organizations responsible for illegal trafficking of methamphetamine and its precursor chemical as priority targets. This attorney will be trained in all aspects of information related to the drug's manufacture and pernicious effect and will be further responsible for stamping out the particular menace of STLs.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Training is a key component to the U.S. Attorney's strategy. Due to the hazardous chemicals involved in producing meth, law enforcement officials must be trained properly to ensure effective and safe outcomes when dismantling a meth lab. In September, 2005, the United States Attorney's Office along with other state and federal agencies including the Michigan Department of Community Health, Office of Drug Control Policy, the Middle Atlantic-Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network and Southeast Michigan HIDTA will be co-hosting a Methamphetamine Investigation Management training program. The program will focus on the meth problem, the process of manufacturing meth, first response and lab scene procedures, clandestine laboratories, STLs, mandated regulations, investigative techniques, raid issues, and drug-endangered children. This training is designed for state and local law enforcement officers.

RESPONSE TO THIS DRUG'S UNIQUE CONSEQUENCES ON CHILDREN

Children who live at or visit meth labs or who are present during the drug's production face specific dangers which include inhalation, absorption or ingestion of toxic chemicals, drugs, or contaminated foods or drink that may result in respiratory difficulties, nausea, chest pain, eye and tissue irritation, chemical burns and death. Fires or explosion can result from dangerous methamphetamine production. In addition, children of meth users are often times subject to abuse and neglect by the using parents who often binge on meth along with having to live in hazardous conditions.

Part of U.S. Attorney Murphy's meth initiative involves implementing the Drug Endangered Children program (DEC) in the Eastern District. DEC programs aim to help children who suffer physical or psychological harm and neglect resulting from presence at or near site of drug production. A nationwide effort to support these programs was launched during President Bush's first term.

Later this year the U.S. Attorney's Office will be conducting an intra-district training program for Assistant United States Attorneys, federal agents, state stakeholders such as county prosecutors and sheriffs on meth and its effect on children. The Office will place training emphasis on how to look for endangerment of children when investigating and prosecuting cases with an eye toward sentencing enhancement and statistical tracking of same. In addition, the United States Attorney's Offices for the both the Eastern and Western Districts plan on hosting the National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children here in Detroit next spring for a two day statewide conference/training to further educate our office, federal agencies and state child protection agency employees on the entire initiative regarding getting children out of situations where they are effected and/or damaged by drug activity.

United States Attorney Murphy will be available for interviews beginning September 2, 2005.